

ECON/PLEC 486-01
Senior seminar
Spring 2013
T 6:00-8:30pm
216 Buckman

John Murray
225 Buckman
x3577
murrayj@rhodes.edu

Welcome to this section of senior seminar. This year's seminar is not officially organized around a specific subfield of economics (or political economy). At the same time, my field is economic history, which encompasses all the applied micro- and macroeconomic subfields, as well as less quantitatively oriented political economy. Thus, the model articles you will read will come from the economic history literature, and the more historical your paper topic, the more I can help you.

The goal in our seminar will be the same as in all other economics-directed senior seminars: the student will conceive and execute a small-scale research project that culminates in a 25-30 page research paper. While this may sound impossibly labor-intensive, if you approach it in the spirit of a steady accumulation of small bits of work performed daily, it will be manageable. In the end you will learn a new skill that will be transferable to all manner of later work, and ideally come to appreciate a narrowly defined area of economics or political economy in some detail.

The course requirements will consist of your attendance at weekly meetings, participation in discussions of your progress, submission of some homework material during the semester, and presentation of the seminar paper itself during one of our last two class meetings, followed by submission of the last draft. The early part of the semester is designed to get you started on your project, the middle part involves some deadlines to bring your project along, and at the very end you will present your paper to the class. Very roughly, the homeworks will count for 10% of your grade, the intermediate stages of the paper for another 10%, the presentation for 10%, and the rest will come from the quality of your paper.

I want you to think about a paper topic. In a first pass, you might pick a particular question that holds your interest. Alternatively, we can discuss your interests and I can suggest a topic. You will begin your data search and reading some of the relevant literature so as to prepare a title and abstract of about 150 words for the meeting of 5 February. Your next step will be to

The second assignment will be a short exercise in estimating ordinary least squares regressions with the statistical package SAS. I expect that most of you are familiar with Stata, but you will find a little knowledge of SAS to be of great use out there in the real world. SAS has been installed on computers in the Barret Library Labs.

On writing: Don't worry about the length of the paper that is due at the end of the term. Worry about the tasks right in front of you: a topic, the homeworks, writing an outline. In the public folder for the course is a Don McCloskey essay on "Economical Writing" (*Economic Inquiry*, 1985) that you might find useful. When you start writing, don't worry about putting the exact perfect combination of words on your screen; just write! There's no *a priori* perfect combination of words anyway, and you can edit your drafts to smooth them out later.

Schedule

Month	Day	To do
January	15	*CANCELLED due to weather*
	22	Intro/discussion of objectives Tools for research: databases and bibliographies
	29	12-15 minute article presentations
February	5	Topic due. SAS intro/exercise
	12	SAS exercise due
	19	
	26	Outline due
March	5	
	12	Spring break: no class
	19	
	26	First draft due
April	2	
	9	Likely no class: I'll be in France
	16	Class presentations
	23	Class presentations